

**John R. Walsh**

"The newspaper which exerts an influence as a newspaper is to be esteemed. The newspaper bossism which operates outside of journalistic lines, through third parties, by subterfuge, by bullying, by menaces, and by craft is to be condemned."—Chicago Chronicle.

Evil and irritating days have arrived for that alliance between the republican wing of the democratic party and the democratic wing of the republican party which finds its headquarters in the Chicago National bank. Hence the drippings of the lachrymatory gland of the Chicago National bank, the Chicago Chronicle.

The Chicago National bank was conceived in politics. Its history is an expose of the long continued intrigue between political interests and business interests in this city.

In 1879 John R. Walsh became a member of the south park board. In 1880 Martin J. Russell, Walsh's newspaper editor, became a member of the board. Since that time there has been no interruption of the personal relationship between the board and the bank. At present John R. Walsh, president of the bank, is treasurer of the board; William Best, director of the bank, is a member of the board; and Lyman A. Warton, vice president of the Equitable Trust company, which is a feature of the bank, is likewise a member of the board, leaving three members for the general public.

The first large deposit which the Chicago National bank acquired was that of the south park board. For years this deposit was confined by litigation to the vaults of the bank and formed a fund from which loans were issued, interest collected, and the prosperity of the bank established.

Then Walsh, a democrat, began signing treaties with his republican allies. Frederick M. Blount became an official of the bank. He is now vice president. In 1884 he was treasurer of the west park board. Today he is still treasurer of the west park board. The funds of the west park board go, therefore, for first lodgment to the Chicago National bank.

To Frederick M. Blount was soon added John M. Smyth. Smyth is today a director of the bank, and, with Blount, the bank's republican face. He and his west side comrades, Lorimer, Mamer, and Clark, cause Walsh's influence to be felt in republican nominations.

The democratic column, in its present alignment, marched in at the time of the Ogden gas ordinances. Walsh and Smyth are now directors of the Ogden Gas company. So are Thomas Gahan and Roger Sullivan. When Mayor Harrison failed to sign the ordinance which would have allowed the Ogden Gas company to complete its blackmailing, buccaneering venture by selling out to the People's Gas Light and Coke company, the Gahan and Sullivan democracy seceded from the administration and assumed its present position, with all the accompanying tactical advantages, under the lee side of the Chicago National bank.

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The Ogden gas ordinances were also responsible for the change in Walsh's political philosophy with regard to the proper functions of such bodies as the Municipal Voters' league. Walsh's newspaper, the Chronicle, had thought that the league was a force for civic righteousness. It had said so frequently and emphatically. But when the league opposed the second Ogden gas ordinance, when it gratuitously interfered with the consolidation of the two gas companies, when it stubbornly stood in the way of a financial enterprise in which Walsh was interested, the Chronicle saw that impertinent reformers would undermine the republic. Since that sudden illumination the Chronicle has walked in the light and has fearlessly exposed the unscrupulous deeds of the Children of Darkness who, instead of confining themselves to after dinner laudations of municipal reform, intrude themselves into the active consideration of specific municipal measures.

The endless chain was now complete. The republican links were Blount, Smyth, Lorimer, Jamieson, Haney, especially Haney, and others similar. The democratic links were Sullivan, Gahan, Hopkins, Brennan, especially Brennan, and others similar. The missing link, which bound all the rest together, was found in the person of Walsh, who, as Blount is reported to have declared, has voted the republican as often as the democratic ticket. When Walsh interested himself continually and pertinaciously in the elevation of Haney to the bench he rose high above petty party feelings. When Brennan bought votes for Haney in the Eighteenth ward he was illustrating the same delicate impartiality in his own crude way.

The entente cordiale between Walsh-Hopkins democrats and Walsh-Lorimer republicans reaches its most effusive manifestation in the drainage board. Alexander J. Jones, William Legner, and Thomas A. Smyth are Walsh-Hopkins democrats. Joseph C. Braden (from the Jamieson retinue), Zina R. Carter (from the Lorimer retinue), Frank X. Cloidt (from the Magerstadt retinue), and William H. Baker (from the Blount retinue) are Walsh-Lorimer republicans. Blount is treasurer of the board. He carries its funds first to the Chicago National bank. Contracts go sometimes to democratic firms like Lydon & Drews, Hopkins being Lydon's uncle, and sometimes to republican firms like Lorimer & Gallagher. Non-political firms seldom mar the horizon. Webb and Wenter, the two dissenting members of the board, do their dissenting without cessation and without effect.

In the state legislature the influence of the Walsh coalition has been seen and will be seen. The session of 1897 passed a gas consolidation bill which consummated the Chicago gas monopoly. The session of 1905 will, in all probability, deal with the question of the regulation of the price of gas within the city limits. C. K. G. Billings, chairman of the board of directors of the People's Gas Light and Coke company, is a director of the Chicago National bank. John R. Walsh, president of the Chicago National bank, is a director of the Northwestern Gas Light and Coke company, which is owned by the People's company. If Walsh-Lorimer republicans and Walsh-Hopkins democrats are as strong in the legislature of 1905 as they were in the legislature of 1897 there will be the same disregard of the welfare of the people of Chicago. The men who fastened a gas monopoly on Chicago and who attempted to reinforce the gas monopoly with a perpetual traction monopoly are the same men who today cluster around the Chicago National bank ready to swarm.

It is not, therefore, the past of the Chicago National bank that challenges apprehension. The past has been recalled merely for illustrative and explanatory purposes. If Walsh, the

political banker, the custodian of south park, and drainage board funds, the patron of the Lorimer and Hopkins machine, the reconciler of republicanism and of democracy for the control of the drainage board and for the enactment of suitable corporation legislation at Springfield, were all these things only in the past it would be vindictive malignity to expose them to public view. But the combination exists today. Its cries of pain as it is being cut by Deneen are heard in the Chronicle, which, with all its democratic soul, for column after column deplores Deneen's victory over Lorimer.

The question is, Shall the principles which are represented by Walsh, the Chicago National bank, the Chronicle, and the republican-democratic alliance be allowed to shackle Chicago again to the leg of high finance or shall the blows struck for freedom at the Cook county primaries and the state convention be followed by others equally effective?—Chicago Tribune.



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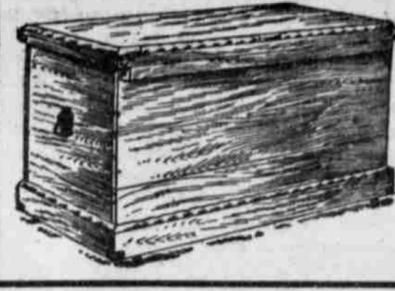
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